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ABSTRACT

The future of America's students and teachers is a crucial challenge. Responding to this challenge, Massachusetts in 1985 enacted Chapter 188, the Public School Improvement Act, which establishes and implements a system for testing and evaluating school and student performance. Since Chapter 188 was implemented, Massachusetts schools have improved faster than the national rate. Proposals for additional school improvements have been drafted by the Commission on REACH (Rewarding Educational Achievement) and School Improvement Councils to develop programs that build on Chapter 188. They propose the following strategies: (1) further energize School Improvement Councils, which empower parents, teachers, community members, administrators, and students to make the crucial decisions that determine the improvement of their schools; and (2) expand REACH, which rewards those schools and professionals who improve the learning of their students. The following recommendations for fiscal year 1988 are made: (1) increase school improvement funds; (2) provide funds for technical assistance to Councils; (3) build expertise of Council members and provide for greater continuity in the council planning process; (4) provide start-up funds for a REACH office within the Division of Curriculum and Instruction; (5) develop criteria for future REACH awards; (6) establish a council on the measurement of student learning; and (7) authorize REACH awards beginning in fiscal year 1989. A list of Commission members, and their photographs, are appended. (BJV)

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# Leading The Way

REPORT OF

# The Special Commission

ON

# REACH

(REWARDING EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT)

AND

# School Improvement Councils

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*In 1837, a distinguished member of both the Massachusetts House and Senate became the first Secretary of this state's (and America's first) department of education. His name was Horace Mann.*

*Today, one hundred and fifty years later, our legislative leadership continues in that great historic tradition of commitment to innovation and excellence in education.*

*For their dedicated support of the work of this commission and on behalf of the children of this commonwealth, we would like to thank Senate President William M. Bulger, Speaker of the House George Keverian, Senator Patricia McGovern, Chair of Senate Ways and Means, and Representative Richard A. Voke, Chair of House Ways and Means.*

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*Leading The Way*

# Report of The Special Commission on REACH (Rewarding Educational Achievement) and School Improvement Councils

Massachusetts State Legislature
August 1987

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Joint Committee on Education

Nicholas A. Paleologos
House Chairman
Joint Committee on Education

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# Message from the Chairmen

Throughout our history — from our transition from agrarian to industrial society, through our assimilation of millions of immigrants, to our response to the challenge of Sputnik — our public education system has carried out its mandate: education for all Americans. In each succeeding generation, political leaders, educators, scientists and corporate executives have insisted that universal education was the prerequisite for a prosperous nation and that without successful public education the United States would not become or remain the pre-eminent industrial democracy in the world.

Profound concern about current public education is therefore understandable. Surveys, articles, commissions and reports paint a bleak picture of our public schools. The question then becomes what to do. Shall we find fault — students, teachers, television, family dislocation? Shall we wistfully hearken back to the way schools used to be and then give up? Blaming and complaining, however emotionally satisfying, will not confront the insistent issue: the future of our public schools. As in previous generations, the public schools are our future.

In 1985, Massachusetts stopped blaming, reminiscing and wishing. Instead of adding to the alarmist rhetoric and pessimistic doubt about public education, we acted. We began a program to improve learning and teaching. Fortunately, we began from a strong position. Massachusetts, by almost every index of student performance and teaching condition, ranks among the top states in the nation. But that is not good enough for the 21st century.

Our goal is to have the best educated population in the United States. By the year 2000, we want Massachusetts to have the most successful students and teachers in the nation.

## *The Public School Improvement Act of 1985*

Two years ago Massachusetts faced the crucial challenge: the future of our students and teachers. Responding to this challenge, Massachusetts enacted Chapter 188, the Public School Improvement Act of 1985. The realities of 1985 and the auguries of the 21st century compelled us to act.

### What We Did and Why

The background to Chapter 188 was our understanding of the essential role of education in American society. We recognized that a growing, prosperous economy and the preservation of our political institutions depended on the reform and strengthening of our public education system. America's economic growth was in jeopardy. Other societies had been generating the technology and industry to threaten our competitive edge in the world. To maintain and increase our standard of living required a literate and knowledgeable work force educated for an "information age." We also understood that our political institutions depended on an educated populace, an informed electorate able to participate in the decisions of government. We agreed with The National Commission on Excellence in Education when it asserted: "A high level of shared education is essential to a free, democratic society and to the fostering of a common culture, especially in a country that prides itself on pluralism and individual freedom." In sum, without rigorous education, our post-industrial democracy is a nation at risk.

The more immediate and pressing foreground, however, was our realization that Massachusetts' schools were not reaching their potential. The conditions of learning and teaching had to be improved. We needed a policy that would support and reward school improvement and educational achievement.

Through Chapter 188, now in its second year, we have responded, taking our first steps leading to excellence in learning and teaching. We are no longer uninvolved spectators and commentators; we have become dedicated participants in the drive to improve our schools. Chapter 188 has begun the renewal of Massachusetts education.

Specifically, we have established and implemented a system for the testing and evaluation of school and student performance. Data from curriculum assessment tests has permitted educators to assess and improve instruction in mathematics, science and reading; and information from basic skills tests has enabled teachers to identify and assist students needing remediation in reading, writing and mathematics. We also have acted to ensure equity of educational opportunity: to equalize fiscal resources among school districts, we have provided funds to communities where student performance might be constrained by school expenditures. Moreover, we have increased the parental and community involvement required to engender the deep, vigorous commitment necessary for a community to oversee and support its schools. In addition, the state has offered rewards and incentives for achieving schools and teachers.

Our method has been to challenge schools to do better. We want resources to follow results. We have introduced programs that would empower those most involved in school decisions — teachers, parents, and administrators — enjoining them to use their talent, energy and expertise to design and implement programs that would lead to school improvement, namely, student achievement and teacher professionalism.

**The Accomplishments of Chapter 188**

Massachusetts has begun to change education in a fundamental way. Our efforts are now focused on the school house — not the state house — and we are responding to the realities of unequal student achievement and increased teacher disenchantment. We have challenged our schools to do better; and school boards, parents, administrators, teachers and students have responded. As Massachusetts' schools complete their second full year of implementation of Chapter 188, we can already discern significant progress in meeting some of the bill's major objectives:

1) Statewide Curriculum Assessment and Basic Skills test results have now been published and disseminated, and for the first time parents, teachers, administrators and the public are able to make informed judgments about the relative performance of their community's schools.

2) With the targeted infusion of $161 million in Equal Educational Opportunity (EEO) grants since FY 86, spending disparities between our wealthiest and poorest communities are beginning to narrow, and we have begun to improve educational opportunities for children in our lowest income communities.

3) School Improvement Councils made up of principals, parents, teachers and students are now functioning in nearly every school building and have begun to provide a structure for teacher empowerment and parent involvement, creating a climate of collegiality in which significant decisions about a school's future can be jointly determined. School Improvement Funds are being targeted to establish new programs, expand student services, purchase needed equipment and pay for other school-initiated projects.

4) The U.S. Secretary of Education, William Bennett, in his 1987 annual report on the nation's schools, singled out Massachusetts for significant achievement on the SAT and commended the Commonwealth for adopting Chapter 188 reforms to improve teacher quality and "to attract the most qualified candidates into teaching." Already there has been an increase in the number and quality of college students interested in a teaching career.

5) Thousands of Massachusetts educators have benefited from opportunities to design and implement programs which use and reward their expertise and creativity in their schools and districts (Horace Mann Teachers) or statewide (Lucretia Crocker and Leadership Academy Fellows).

6) With state assistance, 120 communities have now raised their minimum salary for entering teachers to $18,000, and 98% of Massachusetts teachers are now above the minimum. An additional $51 million has gone out in salary supplements and Professional Development Grants, reaching virtually every teacher in the Commonwealth.

7) Grants to support innovative approaches to early childhood education, basic skills development and dropout prevention have been made to some of our neediest communities, and new coalitions of educators, human service workers, and other community agency leaders are working together to attack these problems.

8) Since Chapter 188, Massachusetts' schools have improved faster than the national rate.

9) Proposals for additional school improvement have been drafted by the two Commissions mandated to develop programs to build on the Chapter 188: The Commission on the Conditions of Teaching and The Commission on REACH and School Improvement Councils.

Chapter 188 has initiated the state's drive to improve the education of its students and the status of its teachers. We have instituted for the first time the annual use of standardized tests to assess student and school performance; committed ourselves to school-

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Teachers' Retirement Board, Age and Service Table, Active Members

level decision-making; acknowledged the state's responsibility to address unequal educational opportunity in a unique context; and given support and recognition to our teachers. In sum, Chapter 188 has generated a new climate for educational reform in Massachusetts, and creative new energies have been released in hundreds of schools across the Commonwealth.

**What We Learned**

Chapter 188 also educated us. In evaluating its performance we learned:
1) The school building and its classrooms must be the focus of reform; the school house, not the State House, must produce educational improvement.
2) There still remains a well of untapped energy in each school community — interested individuals within and outside of each school whose involvement is essential for continued improvement.
3) Improvement occurs in schools where administrators expect professional expertise from teachers, and then support teachers for independent decision-making.
4) Students are still not getting a fair shake in some schools — not necessarily low-spending schools, but nevertheless low-achieving schools.
5) Money should be targeted for specific programs to encourage and support creative ideas and leadership at the building level.
6) School personnel are held responsible for educational progress, or its lack. Improving schools deserve increasing support.

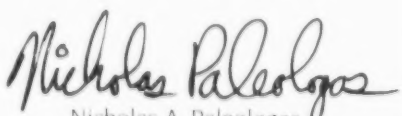
In its first two years, Chapter 188 instituted fundamental reforms in our public schools. It was a beginning, the first step of long-term educational renewal in our schools. The next stage is crucial. It is in this phase that we propose to connect investment to improvement, accountability to reward, teacher professionalization to student achievement.

**What Is Next**

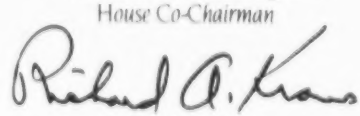
The Special Commission on REACH (Rewarding Educational Achievement) and School Improvement Councils recommends that we extend the initial results of Chapter 188 to refine and strengthen some of the bill's key provisions and to address issues that were unanticipated in the first phase of reform. The Commission proposes to:

- empower the entire educational team, believing that increased involvement by teachers, administrators, parents, students and community will improve school achievement.
- provide dramatic incentives to schools to improve their students' academic performance, substantially rewarding schools and their staffs for meeting educational goals.
- ensure that all students, regardless of economic background, have the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills critical to success over the next decade and into the 21st Century.
- discover if the self-governing school will be the successful school, if the autonomous and rewarded teacher will be the better teacher.

It is through this second phase of reform that we seek to move closer to our vision of schools as productive, satisfying environments where teachers are revered and rewarded for their art and knowledge and where students reach their full intellectual potential.



Nicholas A. Paleologos
*House Co-Chairman*



Richard A. Kraus
*Senate Co-Chairman*

August 24, 1987

# The School Improvement Enterprise

Our goal is clear. We want Massachusetts schools to graduate the best-educated students in the United States — young men and women who will succeed in the 21st century.

It is the responsibility of our schools — as the Carnegie Report, A *Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*, urgently asserts — to produce "young people with the knowledge, the spirit, the stamina and the skills to make the nation once again fully competitive — in industry, in commerce, in social justice and progress, and, not least, in the ideas that safeguard a free society." Our students' personal and vocational success will hinge on their educational success: how well our schools have prepared them for their future; how well our students have mastered the skills, absorbed the information and developed the confidence required for empowerment in a dynamic, changing world. Tomorrow's realities and problems will assuredly demand both analytic and creative thought, and our society's health and progress will rely on our citizens possessing the capacity for critical thinking and continuous learning.

To ensure our future, it will be essential for our schools to promote the physical, intellectual and emotional well-being of each student, instilling in each a positive self-image. In addition, it will be the responsibility of each school to develop their students' potential to the fullest, imparting to each student the paramount importance of learning for personal and career success. In sum, for maximum learning to occur, each school will need to establish a productive, supportive environment.

Chapter 188 laid the foundation for achieving our goal. It committed our energies and resources to the "school improvement enterprise." Now we propose to build on this foundation so that by the end of this century Massachusetts public schools will be the finest in the nation.

To further empower our schools and teachers to take responsibility for successful education, the Commission on REACH (Rewarding Educational Achievement) and School Improvement Councils proposes two strategies. First, we propose to further energize School Improvement Councils as catalysts for school success whereby parents, teachers, community members, administrators and students can make crucial decisions that determine the improvement of their schools. Second, we expand on the REACH principle that is critical for school improvement: rewarding those schools and professionals who improve the learning of their students.

We intend that the new "Goals for Education .n Massachusetts," adopted by the Board of Education, will serve as the framework for the REACH program and School Improvement Councils, guiding schools in the planning and evaluation of school improvement. These Goals are: 1) physical and emotional well-being; 2) critical thinking and communication skills; 3) citizenship in a democratic society; 4) values and mutual respect; 5) arts appreciation and creativity; 6) understanding history and the humanities; 7) understanding mathematics and the sciences; 8) occupational competence; and 9) the capacity and desire for lifelong learning. These Goals will also guide our evaluation of the measures of student performance; such assessment is a vital component of school improvement.

This new accountability will deserve renewed investment in our educators. Through the REACH program, we will provide substantial bonuses to schools and their staffs when they have demonstrated substantial improvement in their school's achievement. In this way, we will be able to raise the pay of teachers to levels competitive with the average salary of other professions requiring the baccalaureate degree so that teaching will attract the best of our college graduates. To support this goal, real expenditures on education over the next decade may have to increase by at least 30 percent. We believe the public will support such increases, as long as they are accompanied by demonstrated improvement in our students' learning.

# School Improvement Councils

School Improvement Councils, in their first two years, have revealed the enormous contribution which the positive involvement of teachers, administrators, parents and students can make to school improvement at the local level. With enhanced funding, responsibility and technical assistance, these Councils can stimulate a new wave of improvement in student learning across the Commonwealth.

## *Current Status*

Today, there are nearly 1,800 School Improvement Councils involving more than 15,000 individuals — principals, teachers, parents, students (in secondary schools) and community members — in improving education at the school building level.

The Commission has noted a trend this school year for Councils to use their grants for programs that enhance and enrich the school curriculum. This contrasts with the first year of the program during which 75 percent of Councils reported purchasing instructional equipment with their funds. In research conducted by the Department of Education (DOE) and in the early returns of the FY 1987 legislatively-mandated School Improvement Council report, 80 percent of the Councils state they are using their funds to enable students, teachers and parents to benefit from specialists, new programs and material, and expanded services. Science, the arts, math, English, computer technology, history, social science and health programs are among those areas benefitting from this trend.

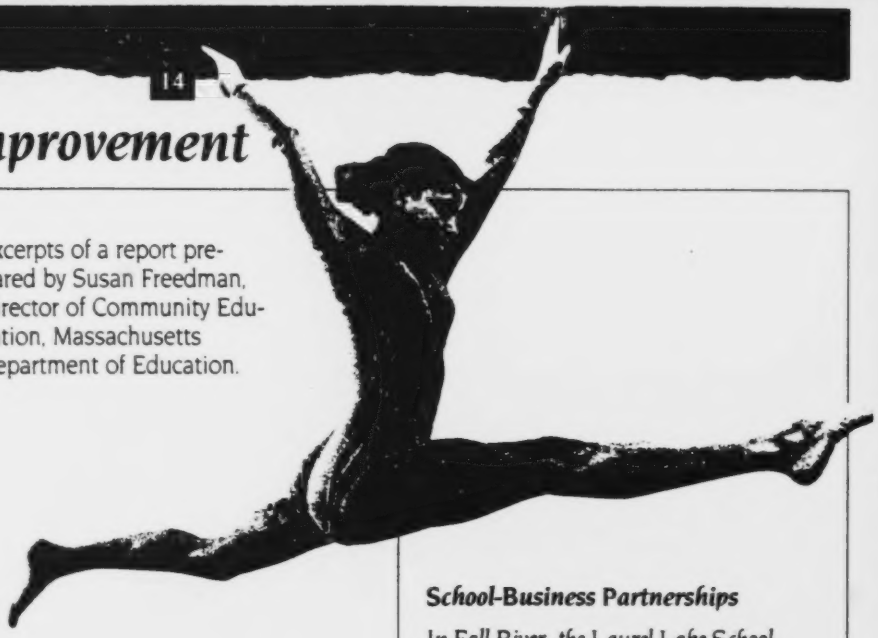
In addition, Councils report they have increased their outreach to and involvement of teachers, parents and community members. More than 75 percent report that they surveyed their communities to identify school needs and solicit ideas for improvement projects. This, in turn, has brought additional resources to schools, because parents, businesses, community groups, parent-teacher organizations and school committees are volunteering to help councils address school needs.

A number of Councils are using their school improvement funds in innovative ways (see Catalysts for School Improvement, p. 14). We intend that all Councils in future years will develop their capacity to fulfill their role as catalyst for school improvement.

# Catalysts for School Improvement

## A Glance at Exemplary School Improvement Practices*

*Excerpts of a report prepared by Susan Freedman, Director of Community Education, Massachusetts Department of Education.



### Empowering Teachers

*An individual teacher's initiative led the School Improvement Council at the Woodrow Wilson School in Framingham to underwrite the start-up costs of what Principal Richard Kennedy described as "a process which will have continuing and long-lasting effect on school improvement." This teacher, as part of her graduate studies, became aware of a comprehensive self-assessment and school planning project which makes use of the principles discovered from the "effective schools" research. School Improvement funds have helped to pay for the services of a nationally-known consultant who is helping the school utilize models of school site planning based on school effectiveness research.*

### Innovative Academic Programs

*At the Federal Street School in Greenfield, part of last year's School Improvement Grant was used for staff in-service training in the "writing process approach" to teaching writing and thinking. This year, the School Improvement Council purchased a bookbinding machine to establish a children's publishing center.*

### Student Initiated Programs

*The Harwich Senior High School Council, with additional contributions from the local Kiwanis Club, purchased software allowing students to improve their test-taking skills in Math, Chemistry and English.*

### New Instructional Equipment

*At the Leeds School in Northhampton, School Improvement funds purchased a micro-projector in order to project, for whole class viewing, objects such as growing crystals or cross-section slides which can ordinarily only be seen through a high-powered microscope. The school found this equipment to be especially useful in the lower grades in which microscope use is limited.*

### School-Business Partnerships

*In Fall River, the Laurel Lake School Council purchased an Apple II computer to take maximum advantage of the Fall River Schools' collaborative arrangement with a computer technology firm in neighboring Somerset. Through this arrangement, teachers were able to attend workshops and copy software demonstrated at these workshops.*

### Fighting Substance Abuse

*Mental Health professionals have collaborated with School Improvement Councils in a range of programs across the state. For example, a workshop for parents, funded by the Council at the Pierce Elementary School in Arlington, was designed to improve parent-child communication about the feelings that youngsters have which may lead them into substance abuse.*

### Cultural Enrichment

*In Dalton, the Craneville School Council used its funds to obtain the services of an artist in residence at the school on 15 Mondays and Tuesdays. During these visits the artist visited classrooms for hands-on lessons with children, organized an after-school art club, and, during recess and lunch break, worked on his own creations in a public space that allowed children to see his work in progress. The artist's residency culiminated in an end-of-year art show displaying the works of both the artist and the children.*

### Creative Use of High Technology

A portion of the Leominster Senior High School's School Improvement Grant was used to purchase a portable video camera that enables students to tape "oral history" interviews with the town's elderly citizens. The interviews will be used to produce a documentary on life in the early twentieth century in a mill town like Leominster.

### After School Enrichment

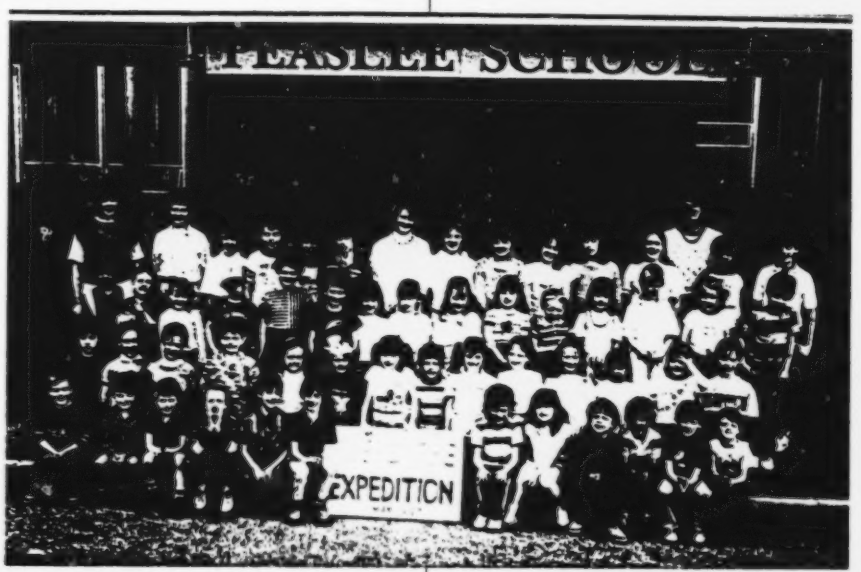
In Fall River, the Doran Annex Primary School allocated its entire School Improvement Grant to an after school program of enrichment activities which involved 108 out of 165 children in kindergarten through third grade. Growing out of teachers' and parents' concern about the problem of latch-key children, the program consisted of one-hour sessions, three times a week, for 12 weeks from February through April. Teachers, parents and community people led programs that included computer literacy, sports, the study of Eskimos, knitting, cooking, ceramics, beginning Portuguese, crocheting and making masks.

### Decision-Making: Involving More Actors in the Process

The School Improvement Council at Boston's Josiah Quincy Elementary School funded materials, refreshments, baby-sitting services and facilitators for a day-long "State of the School Conference" attended by more than 50 parents and teachers. This working conference generated a concrete set of goals and an annual improvement plan for the next school year. The plan and its goals have guided the Josiah Quincy's umbrella School Site Parent and Teacher Council and helped establish priorities for the School Improvement Council.

### Opportunities for Parents

The Council at the Passios Elementary School in Lunenberg appropriated part of its grant for a stipend for a coordinator of a newly established Parent Volunteer Program. To ensure that the volunteer program had an impact on student learning, two teachers were awarded in-service grants to provide 36 hours of training to 20 parent volunteers to enable them to assist the Reading Specialist and work directly with children. In addition, the school staff is pursuing the possibility that parents who participated in the training program will receive college credit.




Above:
A class at the Peaslee School, Northboro, about to embark on its Seashore Expedition project. The Peaslee School Improvement Council funded this environmental field study program for all students, grades K-5.

### Promoting Multi-Cultural Awareness

The Pierce School Council in Brookline used its School Improvement grant to celebrate the cultural diversity of its student body which has children from 15 different language groups. Funds went toward building up the school library's stock of multi-cultural educational materials, and for two storytellers in residence, one Chinese and one Irish. The Council also matched its funds with another program to provide teachers and students with a prejudice-reduction program focusing on the stereotyping of Asians.

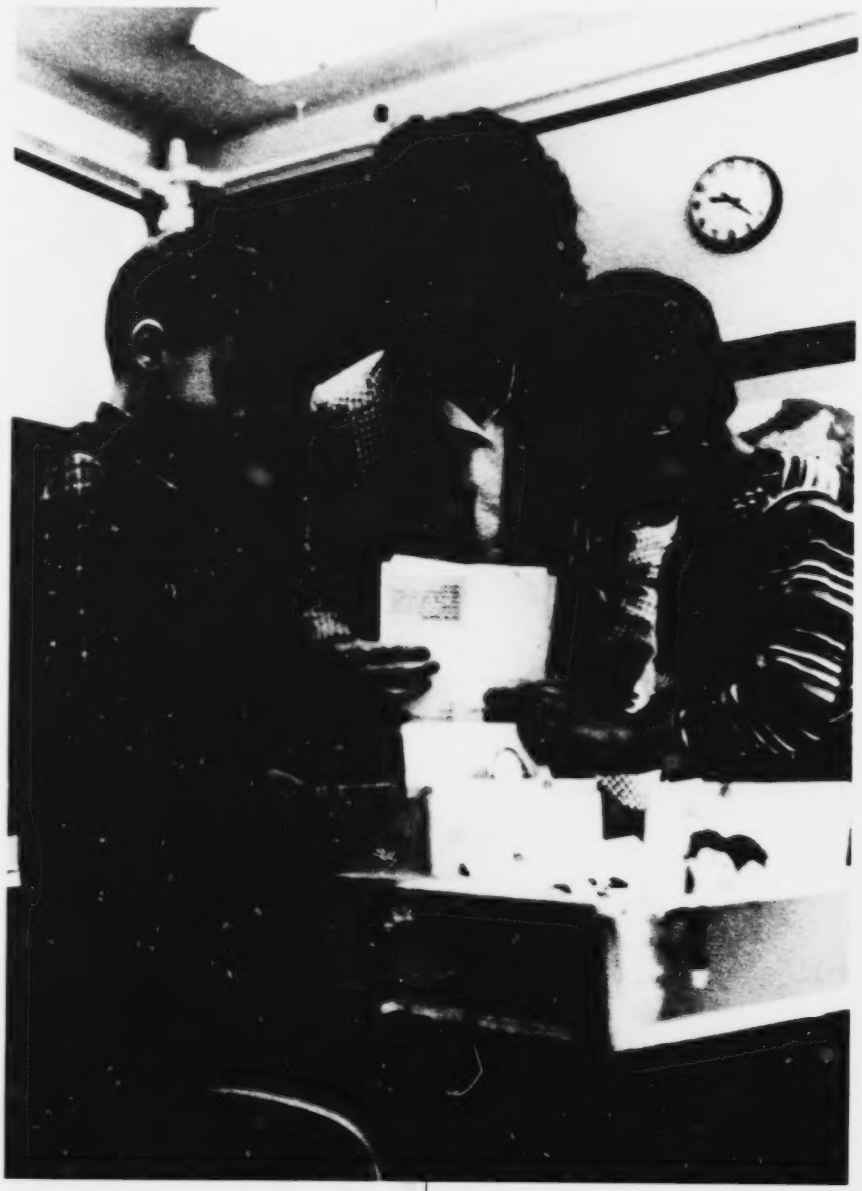
**Fine-Tuning Procedures**

One area that has troubled the Council program over the last two years is timely availability of grants. The lengthy turn-around time between certification of Councils and the release of funds has too often slowed down implementation of school improvement projects and prevented follow-through on commitments for on-going expenses. The DOE has established procedures to remedy this problem.

Beginning in FY 1988, School Improvement funds will be deposited in cities and towns in August prior to Council certification. There are safeguards in this new procedure. Schools will not be able to access funds until they have certified Councils. Signatures of the school principal and the superintendent of schools will be required on certification forms filed with the DOE that contain the names of all Council members. In addition, only Councils that have filed the required year-end funding report will be allowed to access funds.

The DOE sent a letter explaining this new policy to all principals, superintendents and school committee chairpersons in May 1987 along with School Improvement Council certification forms. It should be noted here, too, that the Department pushed up the date for mailing certification forms from the fall of a new school year to the spring of the prior school year. The DOE is commended for establishing these new procedures.

In addition, the DOE began in 1987 collecting the names and addresses of all the Council members. It is now possible to distribute materials individually to each council member. However, there has been a problem in rapidly transferring member information to mailing labels. The DOE should implement procedures to reduce the time lag between data collection and use.



## *Recommendations for Fiscal Year 1988*

### Increase School Improvement Funds

The goal during FY 1988 is to enhance the capacity of Councils to plan for school-wide improvement. The Commission recommends increasing the School Improvement Fund allotment to $20 per pupil. The projected total cost for school improvement grants in FY 1988 is $16.7 million. Further, the Commission recommends coupling this increase in funding to an increase in responsibility: Councils will be required to plan for school improvement by preparing a needs assessment based on the nine Goals adopted by the Board and then identifying those instructional areas on which they intend to make an impact during the academic year.

### Provide funds for technical assistance to Councils

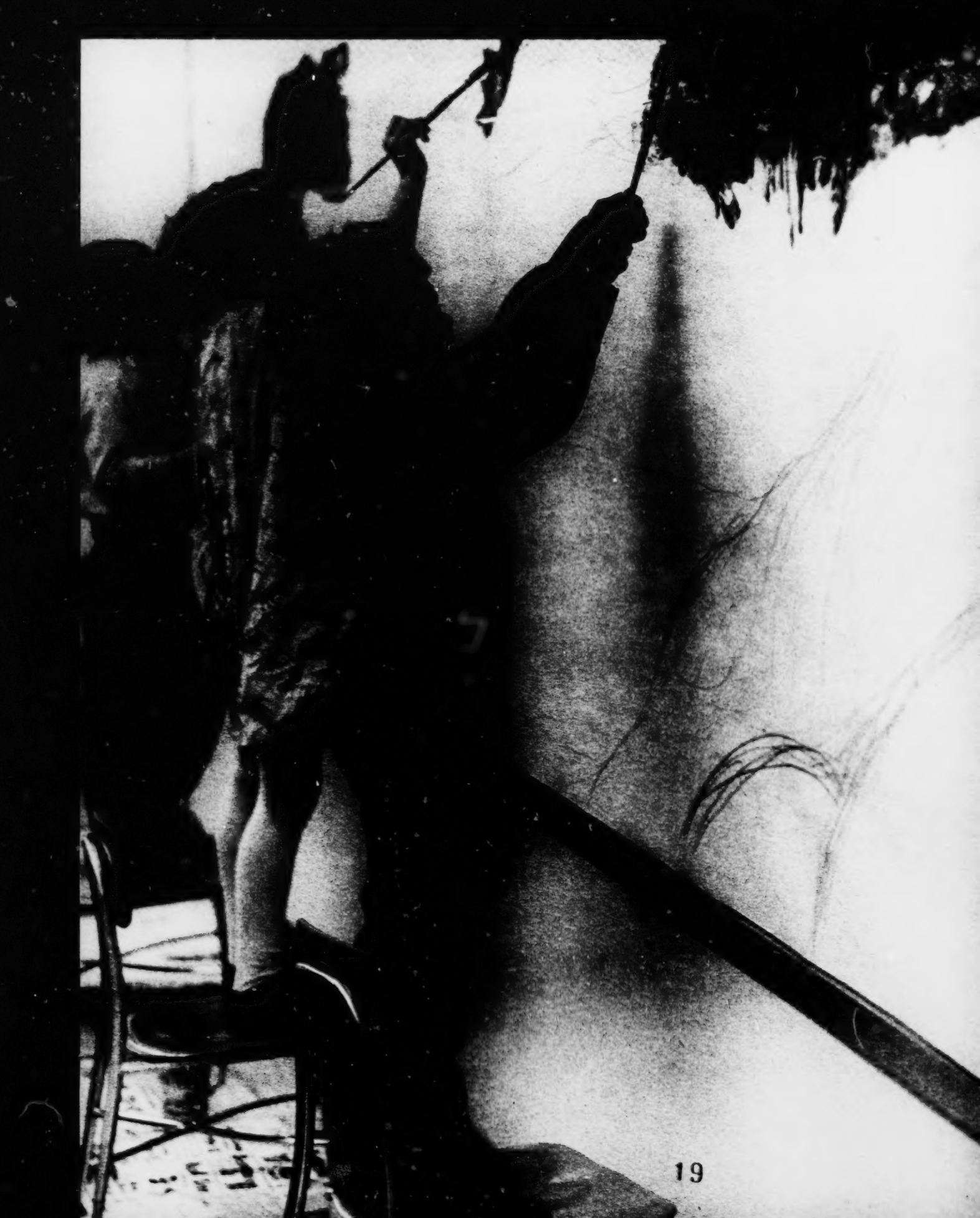
An expanded program of technical assistance to School Improvement Councils is necessary to help them fulfill their responsibilities as catalysts of school improvement. The Massachusetts Department of Education, through its Coordinator of Community Education, has been providing technical assistance — via conferences and publications — under severe funding constraints. Presently there is no budget for technical assistance specifically for School Improvement Councils. This prevents the Coordinator from assisting Councils in a proactive manner through what is regarded in the Commonwealth as an excellent program providing training, consulting and materials.

The Commission therefore recommends adequate funding of $250,000 for technical assistance to Councils in FY 1988 to be administered by the Coordinator of Community Education. This should provide sufficient funds for a clerical support staffperson, research, creative use of media, at least 12 regional sessions and four conferences, and for the publication and dissemination of newsletters, booklets and other materials pertinent to all Council members.

### Build expertise of Council members and provide for greater continuity in the council planning process

One way to strengthen Councils is to encourage members to serve for more than one year, thereby giving them more time to become effective planners/decision-makers and to promote continuity in their activities.

Chapter 188 requires annual election of members. The Commission does not interpret this language to mean that membership is limited to one year. Therefore, the Commission recommends that DOE guidelines for School Improvement Councils clarify the term-of-office requirements, and suggests that, when appropriate and desirable, members run for re-election.



# REACH — Rewarding Educational Achievement

To provide a dramatic incentive for schools to improve the academic performance and educational well-being of their students, we recommend expanding REACH so that any school showing significant improvement will be rewarded. Such REACH awards will foster school accountability, substantially increasing both the funds for public education and citizen support for public schools.

The REACH program will provide financial awards to schools and school districts that demonstrate measurable improvement in meeting the "Goals for Education in Massachusetts" adopted by the Board of Education. REACH awards for success in improving student learning would provide bonuses to teachers, principals and other school building staff and generate additional funds to School Improvement Councils. Ultimately, REACH will result in a major new revenue stream for the Commonwealth's public schools.

## *Recommendations for Fiscal Year 1988*

### Provide start-up funds

The FY 1988 DOE budget should include $750,000 for the establishment of a REACH office within the Division of Curriculum and Instruction. During the fiscal year, this Office would design and implement a program that would inform schools and the public about REACH, and would plan REACH evaluation and dissemination components.

### Develop criteria for future REACH awards

The Special Commission on REACH and School Improvement Councils will recommend criteria for future REACH awards based on the "Goals for Education in Massachusetts." To assist in the process, the Commission will collaborate with the Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands which is headquartered in Andover. As part of its focus on strategic planning in education, this federally-funded educational laboratory will act as facilitator of a Commission forum in October 1987 to develop 1) recommendations for REACH criteria; 2) operational definitions of improvement; and 3) strategies and instruments for measuring academic achievement and other improvements in the educational program. The forum will bring together experts in learning assessment with representatives of the education community in the Commonwealth.

### Establish a Council on the Measurement of Student Learning

To build an auditing capacity to ensure that we, in fact, measure and reward that which we intend, the REACH Commission urges the establishment of an independent council, appointed by the Governor and reporting to the Massachusetts Board of Education. The council should be comprised of experts in educational testing and educational policy from within and outside the Commonwealth. The council would meet quarterly and report to the Board and Legislature one year after its establishment and annually thereafter.

The Council would:

1) Monitor the technical quality of current statewide tests; assess the positive and negative impact of the Massachusetts testing program on students, teachers, instruction and learning; and analyze test results using independent measures (different from tests currently being used) on a sample of students to determine if improvement in test scores really shows improvement in learning and not merely in test preparation.

2) Evaluate the cost-benefits of the testing program — the human and social, as well as the financial.

3) Ensure that the DOE's on-going policy-related data base is being maintained and utilized.

4) Evaluate how well we are progressing in measuring student progress in Massachusetts with respect to the "Goals for Education in Massachusetts."

Annual funding will be required for the council's activities and permanent professional staff. Start up funding needed for FY 1988 for Council planning activities is $80,000.

**Authorize REACH awards beginning in Fiscal Year 1989**

The Commonwealth should adopt a developmental approach for implementing REACH. As we increase our ability to measure improvement in the areas outlined by the Board of Education "Goals," we will give substantial awards to schools for significant improvement in student performance in any of these vital Goals. Criteria for REACH awards in the years ahead may include: improving skills in listening, evaluation and critical thinking; developing in each student a solid base for self-esteem; increasing knowledge and appreciation of the arts, history, the humanities and our multi-cultural heritage; enhancing knowledge and understanding of the responsibilities of citizenship; improving substantive knowledge of the physical sciences, biological sciences and mathematics and increasing understanding of the scientific approach to inquiry and investigation; improving student competence to enter the world of work; and making progress in integrating new technologies into the curriculum.

We are, however, now ready to develop an incentive program in two areas. One is basic skills — an area of vital importance to thousands of Massachusetts students. The second is the school's power to retain its students.

In FY 1989 we propose giving schools REACH awards for basic skills improvement. A school would be eligible for a basic skills REACH award if the percentage of all eligible enrolled students passing all three basic skills tests given in October 1988 increases by five percent over the percentage who passed all three tests in October 1987. Safeguards will be adopted in statutes and regulations to ensure that all eligible students are tested and that student exemptions do not increase.

In addition, we propose a second category of REACH awards for FY 1989 to go to schools and school districts that increase their student "holding power" — their ability to prevent student drop-outs and retain their students in their schools at a rate at least 5 percent over the average of the prior three years.

REACH awards could be used in many ways, but at least 80 percent of the dollar value would be reserved for bonuses for teachers, principals and other school staff.

For FY 1989, $25 million will likely be needed to fund REACH awards.

We hope that the Governor will host an event to announce these pivotal REACH awards, and that the DOE will disseminate to schools and school districts the methods used by successful schools to achieve their improvements.

# Afterword from the Chairmen

We expect Massachusetts' schools to excel — this is our goal.

We have a clear vision of excellence in education. We see it in schools that produce literate and creative students with the knowledge and self-confidence to contribute to our economy and democracy. We recognize it in enthusiastic, dedicated teachers who seek challenges and responsibility, proud that their judgement and expertise is appreciated and rewarded. We find it in communities committed to their schools, where parents and citizens invest their energies and hopes, determined that their children reach their full potential.

To ensure that all of our schools approach this vision, Massachusetts has adopted the School Improvement Act of 1985 which expresses our commitment to achievement in education. But Chapter 188 can be strengthened if our schools — and all those involved in education — are to excel. It is with this goal that the Special Commission on REACH and School Improvement Councils has examined our schools and drafted our recommendations.

To improve the work life of teachers, returning initiative, responsibility and esteem to their profession, we have proposed programs wherein school staffs can plan and implement their approach to school excellence, motivating teachers to collegially determine the destiny of their school and students. To stimulate student improvement in low-achieving schools we have asserted that the staff, parents and concerned community of these schools need to form cohesive, committed organizations determined to improve the education of their children. To encourage schools to establish their own educational priorities we have proposed strategies and programs whereby schools can decide how best to improve the education of their students; and we have indicated how the state will support and reward schools that show demonstrable improvement.

At the end of A *Nation Prepared*, the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession concludes, "It is time to assert a renewed education agenda in the states. In particular we are looking for a few states to lead the way in rethinking the way schools work." Massachusetts has its education agenda. We have our vision of how excellent schools work. It is time to lead the way.

Richard A. Kraus
*Senate Co-Chairman*

Nicholas A. Paleologos
*House Co-Chairman*

August 24, 1987

## Acknowledgements

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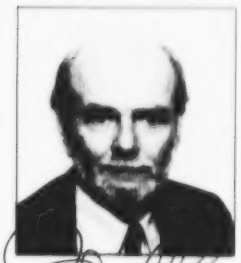

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